



**Statement by Congressman Greg Walden, R-Oregon
Chairman, Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health
November 3, 2005
Introduction of HR 4200,
The Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act**

“The introduction of The Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act (HR 4200) follows nearly two years of work by the Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health to identify obstacles to forest recovery following catastrophic events such as massive wildfires, blow downs and hurricanes.

Our goal is to fix the process without reducing environmental standards. Today, the process forces our federal land managers to be some of the slowest in the country in responding to catastrophic events in a comprehensive and timely way.

The Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act is narrowly written to focus on the removal of dead and dying trees where appropriate, to encourage quicker replanting and habitat restoration using native plants, and provide comprehensive research on the best protocols for future recovery efforts.

During the course of seven hearings on the issue of catastrophic event recovery in our forests, the Subcommittee listened carefully to witnesses representing environmental, academic, Tribal, forestry and timber communities. We asked for and received a Government Accountability Office study of the backlog of restoration needs on our forests—which total more than a million acres. HR 4200 embodies the best ideas and solutions that were presented at those hearings.

People in my state of Oregon don’t accept the notion that it should take three years to remove a burned dead tree after a fire. And yet, all too often that’s what happens. A recent statewide survey found nearly 75% of

Oregonians support use of the wood while it has value and restoration of the forests quicker than occurs today.

The Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act, which we introduced last night, has more original cosponsors than did the Healthy Forest Restoration Act when it was introduced in 2003. The 99 cosponsors of HR 4200 demonstrate that there is a broad cross section of the Congress who not only understand we can be better stewards of our public forests, but also are willing to stand up and do something to fix the problems our foresters have identified.

Before I go any further, let me talk about what this bill does not do. For weeks, groups who had never seen or read the measure we introduced last night were attacking it with outrageous and untruthful claims. Even after some were specifically told that their claims were not accurate, they continued to mislead the public and their special interest group supporters.

So here's what the bill does NOT do:

It does not apply to wilderness areas, national parks or national monuments.

It does not "reward arson." Arson is a class E felony punishable by up to five years in prison, hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines and possible restitution for the lost timber and fire suppression costs.

It does not require "plantation forests." In fact the bill specifically prohibits "plantation forests" and directs that reforestation efforts use native species to create a natural forest or habitat.

It does not override environmental laws such as the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, etc.

It does not override the underlying forest management plans. Whatever is in the very comprehensive management plans, including limitations on harvest areas, preservation of stream setbacks, habitat areas, etc. will continue to govern recovery efforts.

It does not apply its expedited provisions to green timber sales. This is not the "salvage rider." The expedited provisions apply to dead and dying

trees after a catastrophic event where the need for emergency action is needed.

It does not overturn any court decisions or injunctions.

It will not be rammed through a committee with no hearing. It will not be marked up on the same day as the hearing. The Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health will hold a hearing a week from today and we will have witnesses give us their input on the measure. I'm sure we will hear from supporters and detractors. And as we have done for the last two years, we will listen and learn from their comments, criticisms and suggestions.

In this year when we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the creation of our great forest reserves, it is incumbent upon us to protect those national treasures for the future.

As an old Eagle Scout, I still hear the words of my scoutmaster who would tell us kids to "leave your campsite better than you found it." That's what we did with passage two years ago of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, and that's what we will try to do with passage of the Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act. We will leave our forests in better condition than we found them, treading lightly on the land, protecting water quality and enhancing habitat, while using the fiber from dead trees while it still has value."

Walden is serving his 4th term in the U.S. Congress. He represents the vast 2nd District of Oregon which includes nine national forests. Walden was the co-author of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act and the author of the biggest single addition to wilderness in Oregon since the 1964 Wilderness Act was passed, the Steens Mountain Wilderness and Cooperative Management Protection Act.